The Story of Ibn Abbad's Library Caravan

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Chapter 1: The Scholar-Minister of Persia

A Statesman with a Scholar’s Soul:

Ibn ʿAbbād was a renowned minister of Persia, celebrated not only for his administrative acumen but also for his deep devotion to the world of books. He possessed an exceptional passion for reading, which shaped the course of his personal and professional life.

A Library Like No Other:

Such was his love for knowledge that his personal library contained one hundred and seventy thousand valuable books. This monumental collection stood as a testament to his lifelong pursuit of learning and scholarship.

The Travelling Archive: Knowledge on the Move

Due to the nature of state responsibilities, Ibn ʿAbbād was frequently required to travel to distant provinces. Yet, even during these journeys, his treasured library never left his side. He ensured that his collection accompanied him at all times, regardless of the remoteness of his destination.

The Caravan of Knowledge: Organised by Alphabet

To facilitate the transport of this massive archive, a fleet of four hundred camels was specially trained. These camels were conditioned to walk in a particular order—arranged according to the alphabet. This systematic arrangement ensured quick access to any volume within the travelling library.

The Keepers of Wisdom: Librarians in the Desert

Alongside the camels, a team of experienced librarians travelled with him. Whenever Ibn ʿAbbād required a specific book, these librarians would retrieve the desired volume and present it to him within a matter of minutes.